

IDAHO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

AGENCY STRATEGIC PLAN

For fiscal year July 1, 2004 - June 30, 2005

Submitted this 29th day of June, 2004

Signed

Leslie R. Goddard, Director

Approved

Estella Zamora, President
Idaho Human Rights Commission

IDAHO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

MISSION

To implement within the state the policies embodied in the federal fair employment practice acts banning discrimination based on race, sex, color, religion, national origin, age (40 and over) and disability. The Commission also seeks to secure freedom from housing, public accommodation and education discrimination based on race, sex, color, religion, and national origin. In addition, in housing only, the Commission works to ensure freedom from discrimination based on disability. The Commission also works to protect the personal dignity of residents by promoting the interests, rights and privileges of individuals within the State.

VISION

Over the next several years, the Commission will improve and refine its case processing system. This will help ensure:

- more effective complaint screening
- more comprehensive referrals
- more successful strategies in obtaining early mediated settlements
- more timely complaint investigations
- more successful compliance activities in addressing law violations

The Commission will increasingly utilize technology in order to increase its efficiency and will be successful in obtaining statutory changes to increase its investigative powers.

The Commission will maintain its educational activities in an effort to obtain voluntary compliance with the law. It will be on the forefront of addressing, in alliance with others, issues of prejudice and bias especially when community and individual safety and security are at risk. This will happen with leadership from a dedicated and diverse body of Commissioners who oversee the operation of a highly trained staff committed to enforcement of its laws.

KEY EXTERNAL FACTORS

The Commission must maintain impartiality and confidentiality in case processing, even though doing so may impact negatively on efforts to maintain effective working relationships with business, industry, and constituent groups. Such organizations are upset from time to time regarding the processing of a charge filed with the agency.

The eradication of discrimination by its very nature challenges well established power relationships and will at times make the Commission controversial among some powerful individuals and organizations.

Demographics, social and economic issues will have a major impact on the Commission.

- The increase in the size of the minority population
- The disproportionate amount of poverty among women and minorities
- The increased use of technology in entry level jobs
- New federal anti-discrimination legislation
- Increased activity of the plaintiff's Bar
- Increased distrust and frustration with government
- Increased media attention to race relations
- Increased attention to diversity and inclusiveness by industry and government.

- Some incidents of misuse of Commission process
- Amendments to state law which mandate administrative filings
- Emergence of the gay and lesbian community and discrimination issues.

The agency will continue to walk a tight rope as it maintains its impartiality and objectivity while acknowledging it needs support from power elites to obtain appropriations and statutory changes designed to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

EEOC will continue to set contracting principles which may not always reflect priorities within the Commission. EEOC will decrease the availability of federal funds for case processing by state agencies. EEOC will increase its presence in the state through systemic charges and litigation.

Human resources issues will impact the ability of the Commission to be fully staffed. Specific issues to be considered are:

- a. Limited promotional opportunities within the Commission
- b. Limited ability to reward employees monetarily
- c. Changes in the Idaho economy affecting availability of new employees and other employment opportunities for staff members
- d. Availability of staff training
- e. Idaho's reputation regarding human rights issues impacts our ability to recruit human rights workers, both internally and outside the state.

FIVE-YEAR GOALS

To continue to refine case processing procedures which seek to maintain a high level of productivity while maintaining quality with an emphasis on mediation.

To provide resources to enable the Commission to increase its visibility and provide more public information, training, technical assistance and community liaison activities while maintaining a non-adversarial approach to conflict resolution.

To serve as a proactive advocate and catalyst for positive social change in the field of human rights.

To provide technology and training in its use to increase both the efficiencies of case processing and the accessibility of public information.

To have a fully staffed workforce; provide staff training through in-house sources and outside the agency as appropriate; compensate employees appropriately for the work they perform; and provide promotional opportunities as possible.

KEY ADMINISTRATIVE OBJECTIVES

Utilize a philosophy of continual process improvements and develop methodologies for setting goals, tracking, and monitoring and improving case processing procedures.

Lobby for expanded jurisdiction and statutory changes where appropriate.

Enhance the network with other human rights advocates and organizations.

Develop or make available quality educational materials, brochures, training packages and videos and disseminate them to interested participants throughout the state.

Select, evaluate, train and support staff not only for their skill qualifications, but also for their values and personal motivation to contribute to the field of human rights.

Compensate employees for meritorious performance.

Objective

To reduce the average case processing time to 8 months and also reduce the number of cases that takes longer than 9 months to process.

To hire and retain a fully qualified staff.

Actions/Strategies

To continue to refine the triage system developed in FY 96. This system allows for the early identification of difficult or meritorious cases. It also allows for early administrative dismissal of cases filed solely to obtain a Notice of Right to Sue or cases where it appears that further administrative processing would not be productive, of value to the parties, or consistent with the Commission's mission. The Commission will focus its limited resources on those cases in which the public interest is more evident, and at the same time, improve processing standards for all charges. Success is measured by meeting the above goal.

To work with the Division of Human Resources to be sure that all staff positions are accurately classified, with the level of responsibility clearly reflected in the classification; to work with the Division of Human Resources to recruit statewide when openings occur; to do additional recruiting among interested minority groups within Idaho; to work with the Division of Human Resources to expedite the hiring process while retaining the merit system; to provide all employees with training sufficient to allow them to fully perform their jobs; to work with the Division of Human Resources and Legislature to obtain funding for salary increases for meritorious performance; and to employ other methods of recognition for outstanding performance.

Objective

To increase to 33% the number of no fault settlements or withdrawals with benefits obtained prior to a determination.

Actions/Strategies

To define mediation at the intake stage of case processing and to be alert during the investigation of a claim to the potential of its use. Success is obtained if the Commission closes 33% of its cases as "no fault settlements" or withdrawals with benefits.

Objective

To continue to process claims in a timely, helpful and impartial fashion.

Actions/Strategies

To continue to survey respondents following the closure of a case to determine if they found the staff to act in a timely, helpful and impartial fashion. Success will be measured if 85% of those responding report satisfaction with the Commission's procedures.

Objective

To propose and support legislation designed to strengthen Idaho's laws governing human rights, thereby improving Idaho's ability to address any violations of human rights in a timely and thorough manner. Legislative proposals may include amendments to the Idaho Human Rights Act, the state equal pay act, or other state laws impacting human rights.

Actions/Strategies

To submit draft legislation to the Division of Financial Management pursuant to policy and to proceed with the process if given the authority to do so by the Governor. To support legislation initiated by others, which supports human rights.

Objective

To actively work with key human relations groups statewide, providing technical assistance on human rights issues.

Actions/Strategies

The Commission will continue to respond to as many invitations to speak as possible and will be active in organizations supporting equal opportunity, diversity, and fostering human rights. Such efforts will be tracked on monthly performance reports and by continuing to collect information on the technical assistance presentations made by staff. Success will be measured if the Commission can respond to 30 invitations during the year.

Objective

To obtain increased financial and program support from the Legislature.

Actions/Strategies

Commissioners will increase their contacts with the Legislature and other elected officials. The Commission will disseminate more information about the Commission's work to the Legislature and other parts of the community.

Objective

To determine the extent of reported inter-group tension in various areas of the state and transmit this information to appropriate leaders in order to decrease such tension.

Actions/Strategies

To actively seek from Commissioners and staff, as well as from community leaders and statewide news sources, information on the amount of inter-group tension existing on various issues in different geographic areas of the state and report troubling increases to appropriate sources. Inter-group tension on a nationwide scale will be followed. Success will be measured by:

- *Monitoring quarterly the hate crimes statistics collected by the Department of Law Enforcement.*
- *Maintaining at least annual contact with human relations groups active within the state*
- *Maintaining quarterly contact with certain federal agencies such as the Community Relations Service of the Department of Justice and the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.*
- *Monitoring state and national news stories from the Internet.*